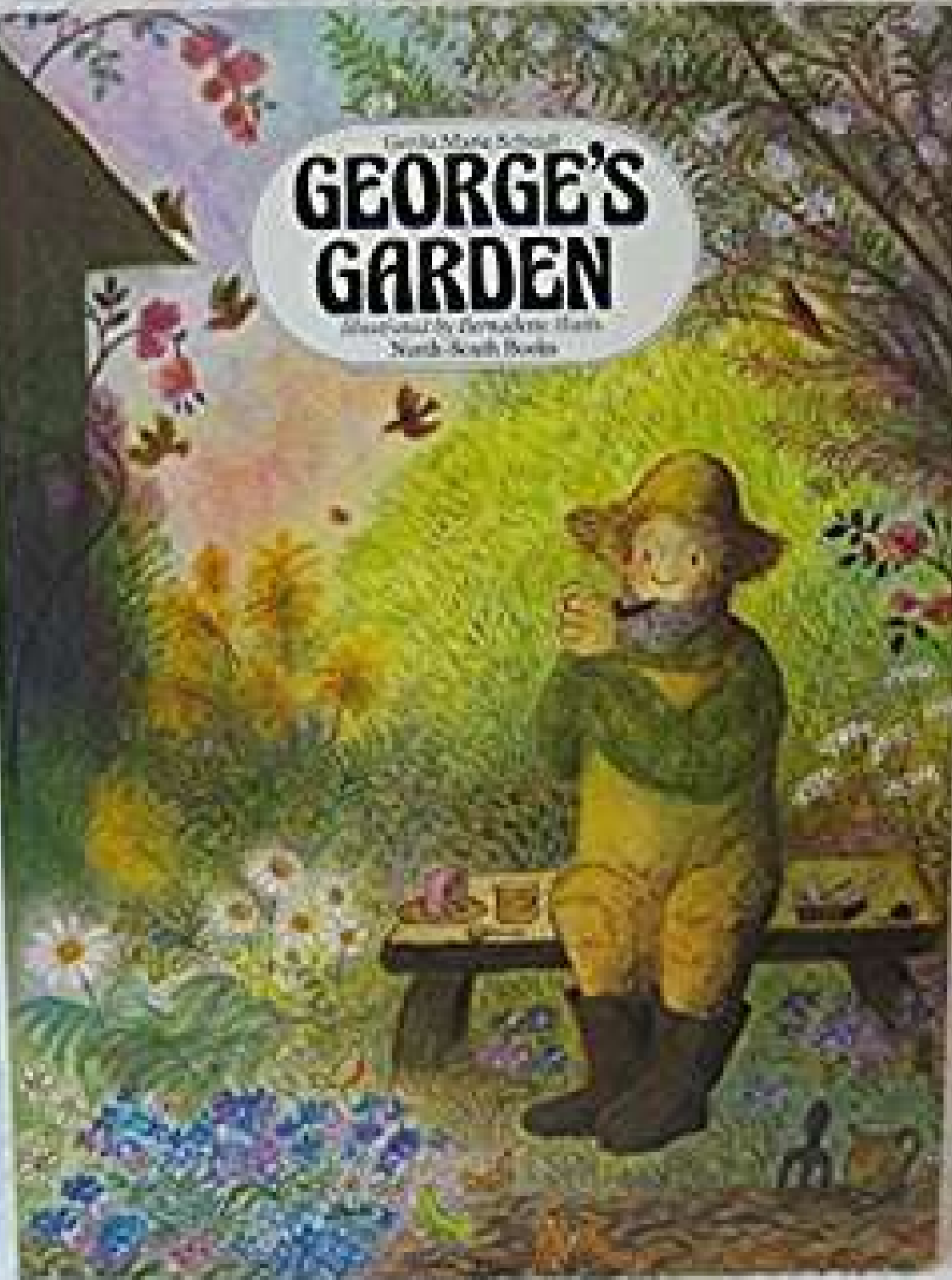


Tom & Mary School

GEORGE'S GARDEN

Illustrated by Fernandine Harris
North-South Books





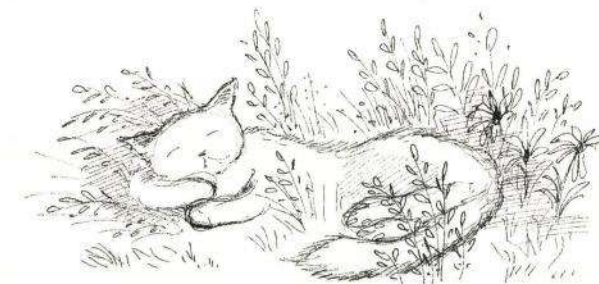
68





George's Garden

Written by Gerda Marie Scheidl
Illustrated by Bernadette Watts





George the gardener could talk to flowers, birds, and animals.

No one else understood them quite as well. Other people knew all about car engines that broke down, or television sets that went wrong, but they would never hear the songs of birds and the whispering of flowers.



George's garden was quite small. "I don't mind. It's big enough for me," he said. A cherry tree grew there, and an elder tree shaded his bench.



Wild roses, bluebells, and big white daisies all bloomed in George's garden. He did not have an ordinary lawn, but a lovely meadow, dotted with red and white clover, dandelions, and daisies.

As George watered the flowers, they nodded and said, "Thank you."

"It's a pleasure," George said, nodding in return.



At dusk he sat on his bench to rest.

But one evening, something was worrying him. Why were the birds twittering? What were the flowers whispering as they swayed to and fro? "What's the matter with them all?" he wondered.

"Why aren't they asleep?" They were unhappy. But why?

A daisy—the smallest of all the flowers—didn't want to stay in George's garden. It wanted to bloom in the garden next door. The next-door garden was hidden by a high wall.

A few days ago, when his neighbor was out, George had dared to peep over the wall.





What had he seen? Beautiful flowers: splendid roses, stately delphiniums, noble lilies, and elegant carnations! Amazed, he told his own flowers all about it.

He had not stopped to think how they would feel, because he liked his own garden so much and better. But ever since then, the little daisy had been unhappy in George's garden.

"I want to bloom next to roses and lilies, not here among weeds," it said.

"We're not weeds," murmured the meadow flowers sadly. George was sad, too. Of course, the little daisy could not run away, so George had to think of some way to help it.



He waited until evening fell. As soon as it was dark he dug up the daisy and climbed over the wall. Silently he crept through the next-door garden and planted the daisy in the middle of the lawn. He said, "You can see all the pretty flowers from here, and you'll get enough sunshine." Then he climbed back over the wall.



It was time to go back indoors, but George did not feel like it.

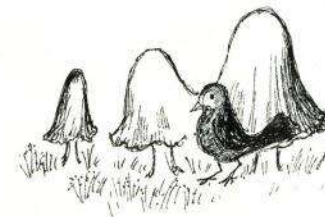
"I can't go to bed and sleep as if nothing has happened," he thought. "I'll go on working for a little while."

Later, when the moon had risen, George walked around his garden and sighed.

"Don't be sad!" called the nightingale from her nest in the elder bush. I will sing you my most beautiful song."

"Please do," said George, "but sing loudly so that the the daisy can hear."

He listened to the nightingale's song for a while and then he fell asleep.





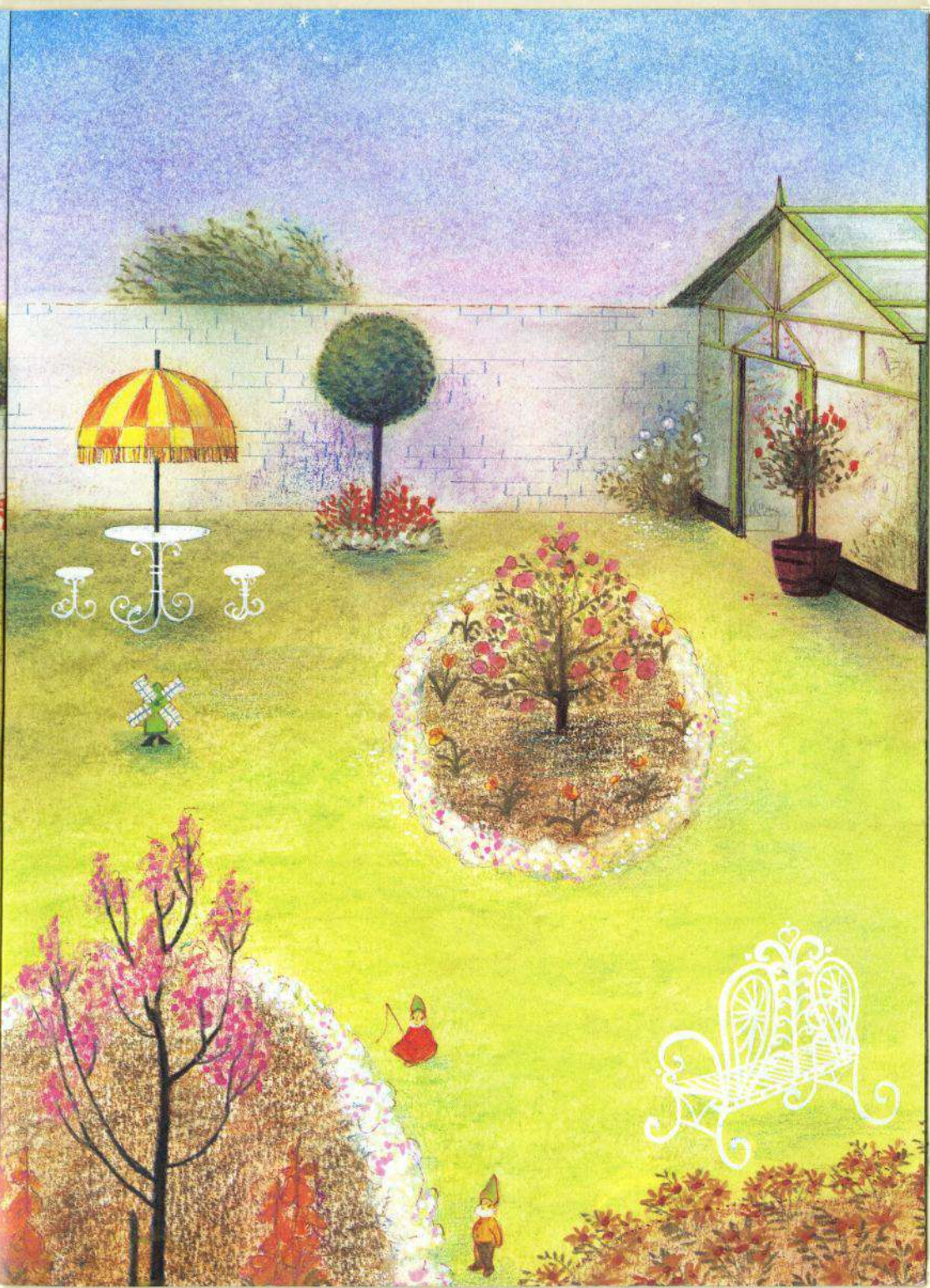
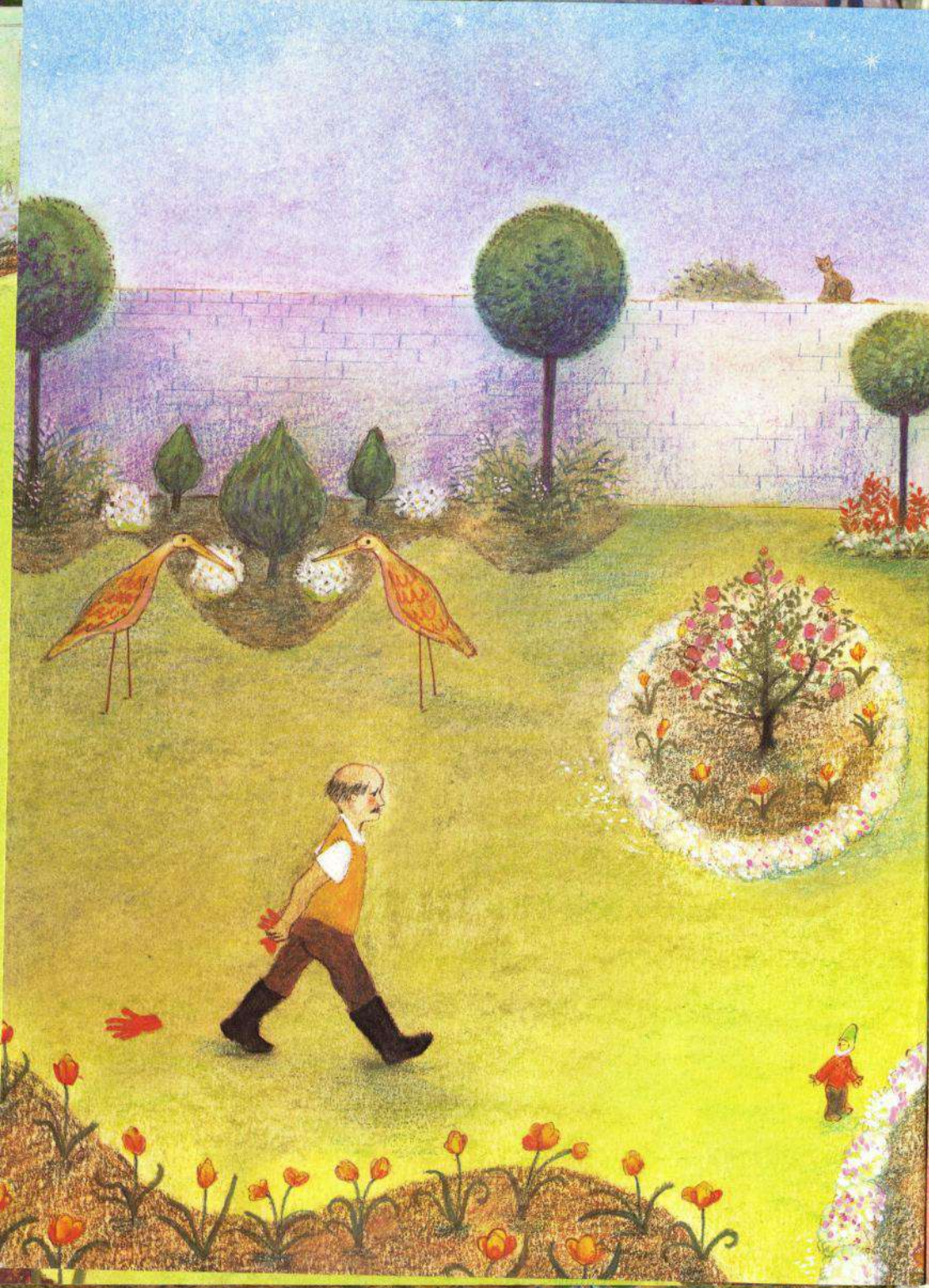
Next morning, the little daisy was frightened, sitting all alone on the strange lawn. Then it saw the other flowers. It had never seen such lovely flowers before. "Hello," said the daisy, in a friendly way, but the flowers didn't reply. They stood proud and still and didn't even look at her.

The owner of the garden soon discovered the little daisy_

"How did this get on my lawn?" he shouted, I can't stand weeds!" Angrily he dug the daisy up and flung it onto the compost heap. Horrified, a butterfly flitted over the wall and told George what had happened. "Now the poor little flower will die of thirst!" George thought. "How can I save it? Climb over? No! That man would never let me into his garden."

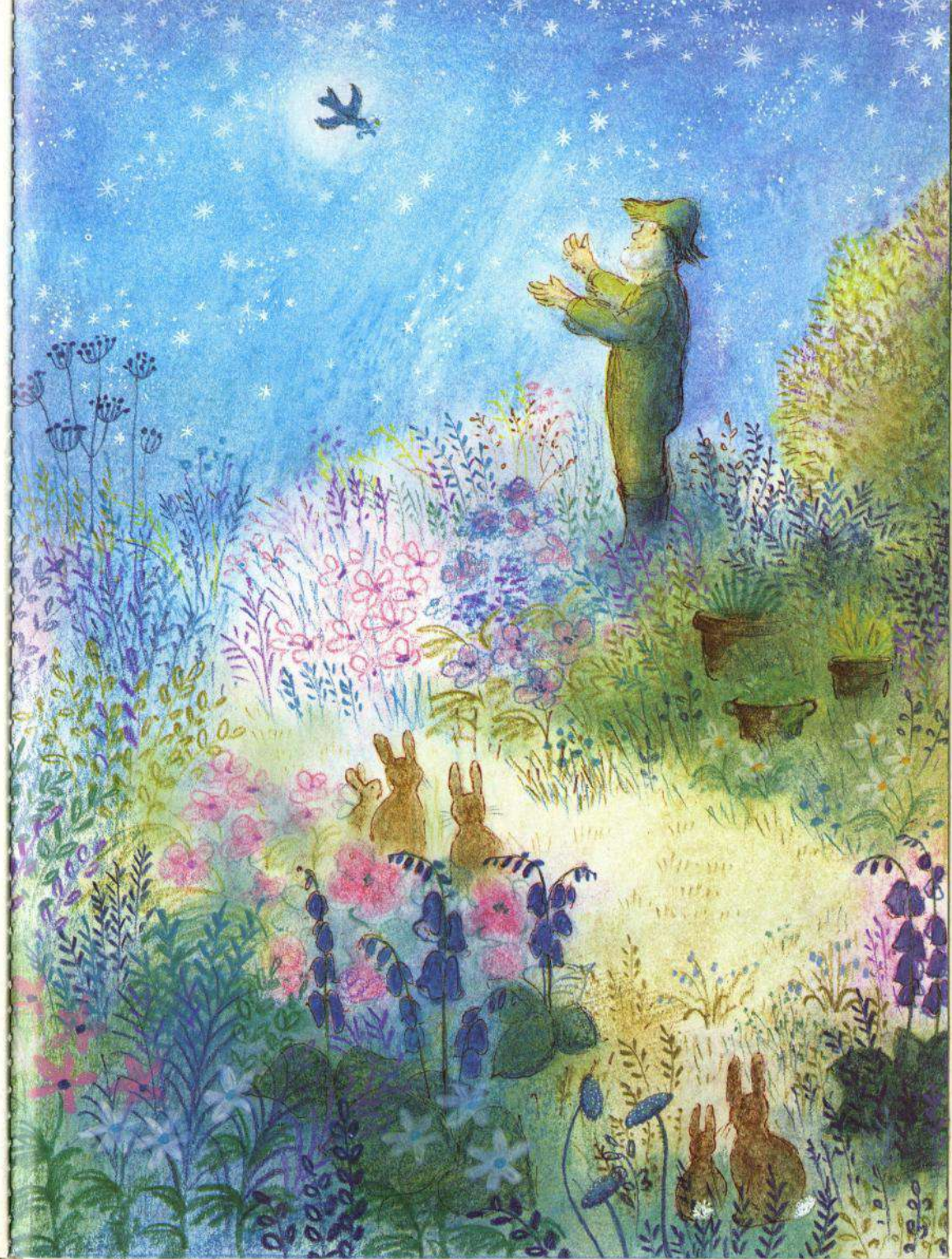
All he could do was wait until his neighbor went away, but the neighbor showed no sign of going. He liked to sit in his garden, too. "Oh dear, oh dear!" murmured George as he wandered around restlessly. No one could sleep. The flowers trembled in the evening breeze. Beetles scuttled through the grass. Not even the birds could rest. Everyone was worried about the little daisy.

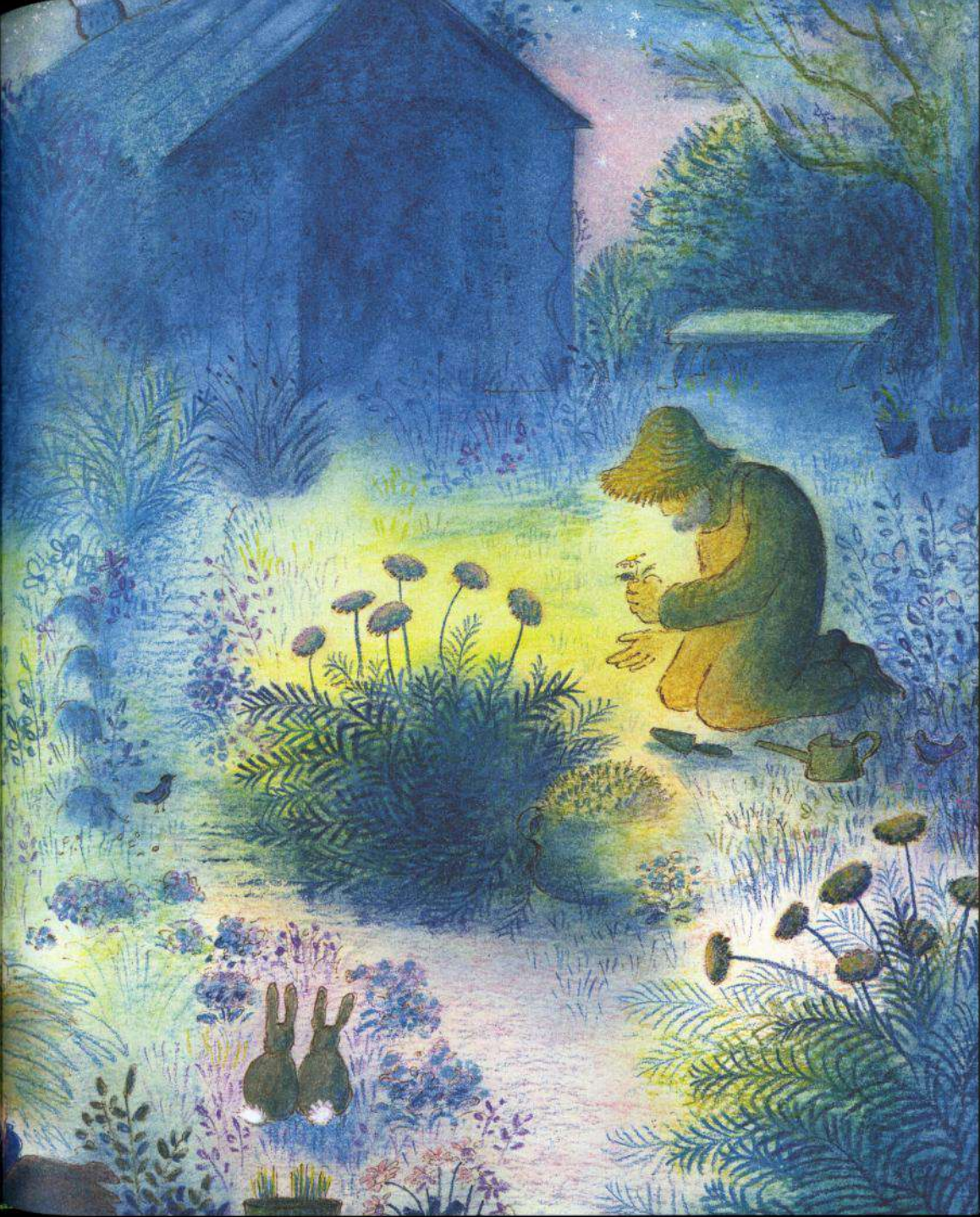




"Can't anyone do something?" asked George, in despair.

"I can," piped the nightingale. She flew swiftly over the wall and returned with the wilting daisy in her beak. George immediately planted it in the moist earth. The daisy opened its petals once again to say thank you.







George understood. "Sleep now," he said softly, and lay down on his bench under the elder tree.

Everything slept. Only the wind wafted through the garden and the nightingale sang her loveliest good-night song.





68



